

# Other Health Impairment (OHI)

## INCLUDES MANY HEALTH CONDITIONS

In order to receive special education and related services according to The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), a child must qualify in at least one of 13 categories. Other Health Impairment is one of those categories, and there are quite a few disabilities and disorders that fall under this umbrella term. IDEA's definition mentions many disabilities that are very different from each other. The disabilities listed, however, are only a partial list of health conditions a child could have when considering eligibility for special services. What's important, is that the child has:

- limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic health problems; and
- educational performance that is negatively impacted as a result.

## MEDICAL ISSUES

Because the health of the child is a priority, it is extremely important to keep doctor appointments, medical appointments for lab tests, hospitalizations, and see to the child's well-being. The medical care of a child with a chronic condition can be overwhelming and result in many missed school days with loss of instructional time.

### Other Health Impairments

IDEA and AAC have defined Other Health Impairments as:

having limited strength, vitality or alertness; including a heightened alertness to environment stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette Syndrome. If a medical diagnosis is presented, the medical diagnosis alone is not enough to justify being identified in the area of other health impairment. The impairment must adversely affect the educational performance of the child.

*290-8-9.03(9)(a)*

Having a chronic health problem is not enough to meet the definition of OHI; the child's educational performance must be negatively impacted as a result of the impairment. If the child is eligible for special education, he will also be eligible for related services, which are provided to enable the child to benefit from their special education. Three possible related services which could be provided if required, include:

1-Medical services, which are provided for diagnostic and evaluative purposes only, and which are defined as services provided by a licensed physical to determine a child's medically related disability that results in the child's need for special education and related services.

2-School health services and school nurse services, which are defined as health services that



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are designed to enable a child with a disability to receive a free appropriate public education as described in the child's IEP. School nurse services are services provided by a qualified school nurse. School health services are services that may be provided by either a qualified school nurse or other qualified person.

Many medically fragile children could not attend school without the supportive services of school nurses and other qualified people. For a child with epilepsy, school health services and school nurse services could provide the child's medication during school hours, and give first aid instruction on seizure management to the teachers. School nurses could assist in diabetic insulin monitoring, and assist when a student needs epi-pen injections. Some students will need an individualized health plan, in addition to their Individualized Education Program.

3-Counseling services-to help the student address some of the problems dealing with the psychological and social aspects, fear of seizures, loss of control and embarrassment in front of friends.

Determining which related services are needed, is a decision of the child's IEP team, the group that develops the child's IEP. Since a child is evaluated in all areas of suspected disability, the evaluation results will show the child's areas of strength and need, and decide which related services are appropriate. Even during extensive absences from school, the school system is still responsible for providing educational and related services to the child with OHI who is hospitalized or homebound.

The school may arrange for a homebound instructor to bring assignments to the home or hospital, and help the student complete the assignments.

## OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT INCLUDES ADD/ADHD

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Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are considered under OHI if the qualifying criteria are met. ADD/ADHD is a condition that makes it hard for a child to sit still, control impulsive behavior, and pay attention. These difficulties usually begin before the age of seven, but some behaviors may not be noticed until later. When a child shows signs of ADD/ADHD, he or she needs to be evaluated by a trained professional to rule out other reasons for the child's behavior, and find out if there are other disabilities along with the ADD/ADHD. School can be hard for children with ADD/ADHD, but the symptoms can be managed by:

- Helping the child learn skills at home and school to control behavior,
- Creating an educational program to meet his needs, and
- Providing medication, if parents and doctors agree that this would help the child.



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## HELP IS AVAILABLE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Two systems of help are available to help eligible children with other health impairments. Those special services are:

**Early Intervention**-a system of services to support infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth through age 2) and their families. If a child is found eligible for Early Intervention services, staff work with you to develop what is known as an Individualized Family Services Plan or IFSP, which will describe your child's unique needs as well as the services he will receive to address those needs. Contact Alabama Early Intervention Services at 1-800-543-3098.



### **Special Education and Related Services-**

Services available through the public school system for school-aged children, including preschoolers (ages 3-21). The federal special education law called IDEA, and corresponding state law called Alabama Administrative Code (AAC), require that special education and related services be made available free of charge to every eligible child with a disability, including preschoolers. These services are designed to address the child's individual needs in the classroom resulting from the disability.

## REFERRAL AND EVALUATION

If you feel your child is in need of special education and related services, the first step is to make a referral to your child's school indicating the challenges you've noticed, and request an evaluation for a disability. The team will review all data and if the referral is accepted, a formal referral form is completed. You must give written consent for the evaluation to be done. The school has 60 calendar days from written consent to complete the evaluation process. If the referral is not accepted, written notice is given to the parent, and the child is referred to the problem-solving team.

Keep in mind that a child does not have to fail in school to be eligible for special education services. A referral for special education should never be denied based solely on the student having passing grades.

An evaluation is the process of gathering information about your child, their potential disability, strengths, weaknesses, and areas of need. If your child is struggling in school and you are concerned about their learning, educational progress, social skills, or behavior, comprehensive special education evaluation may be the information that can help you and your child's school to meet your child's educational needs. The initial evaluation will serve to answer these questions:

1-Does my child have a disability?



Alabama Parent Education Center 

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2-Does his disability affect his educational performance?

3-Does my child need special education and related services?

Just the mere presence of a disability does not automatically qualify your child as **“a child with a disability”** under special education laws. Your child must meet the criteria listed for Other Health Impairments using certain minimum evaluative components. The criteria is somewhat different for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The evaluative components include passing the vision/hearing screening. There must be individual intellectual, achievement, and performance measure scores that document how the child’s disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the classroom, or for preschool, how the disability affects the child’s participation in age-appropriate activities. There must be a statement of evidence of interventions and accommodations that have been tried in the classroom, but were deemed unsuccessful. There must be a statement of medical diagnosis or documentation of the disability. For ADD/ADHD, scores must be 70 or below on two out of three behavior rating scales.

## DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

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When the evaluation process has been completed, the team has 30 days to review all the assessment data and scores, meet with all the other team members, including parents, and make an eligibility decision.

The team will collaborate and create a written report of the testing results. The report will describe your child’s strengths and needs, how your child’s skills compare to others of the same age or grade level, whether your child has a qualifying disability, and what individualized instruction and related services are recommended to help your child. If you disagree with the report, you have the right to request an independent educational evaluation or IEE, paid for by the school. The school is also allowed to deny your request for IEE, but it must take additional steps to prove its evaluation is appropriate.

If your child is identified as **“a child with a disability”** and determined to be eligible, a meeting to develop the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be held within 30 calendar days of the initial eligibility determination. The data obtained during the evaluation is used to determine what services are required for the child to make educational progress. An IEP must be developed and in effect before special education and related services are provided. The school must obtain written informed consent from the parent before the initial provision of services to the child.

Sometimes the test scores and data do not meet the qualifying criteria for disability, and your child is denied eligibility for services. If you disagree with the ineligibility decision, you have the right to appeal this decision and should inform the school. You will receive a written copy of your Special Education Rights from the school, which contains information on due process procedures to follow. You can also contact our staff for assistance.



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If the child is not eligible for services under IDEA, he or she may be eligible for services under a different law called Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students with 504 Plans could benefit from accommodations and assistive technology. Ask the school how to access 504 services for your child, if you feel they are needed.

## RESOURCES

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Alabama Department of Education, Special Education Services [www.alsde.edu/sec/ses/](http://www.alsde.edu/sec/ses/)

Children's Rehabilitation Services  
[www.rehab.alabama.gov/crs](http://www.rehab.alabama.gov/crs)

Alabama Early Intervention Service  
<http://www.rehab.alabama.gov/individuals-and-families/early-intervention>

American Diabetes Assoc. Safe at School  
<http://www.diabetes.org/>

Epilepsy Foundation  
<https://www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy/parents-and-caregivers>

ADDitude <https://www.additudemag.com/>

CHADD/The National Resource on ADHD  
<https://chadd.org/>

## YOUR OPINION MATTERS

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**Stakeholder opinion** is very important to our center. We invite you tell us what you think and make suggestions for trainings and publications. Complete a brief survey, call our center, or join our advisory committee. Your input is always welcome.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALPTI>



## APEC IS HERE TO HELP

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